

After a late-night debate Wednesday, two amendments sponsored by Rep. Peter Welch to end the war in Afghanistan came to a vote in the House Thursday afternoon. While both failed, the vote tally reveals growing bipartisan opposition to the war.

Welch's bipartisan amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 1540), the annual blueprint for Pentagon spending, would have required the Secretary of Defense to, within 60 days of enactment, present a plan to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan except those engaged in counter-terrorism activities. The amendment, coauthored by Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), failed by a vote of 123 to 294 and had the support of 18 Republicans. A similar measure earlier this year received 93 favorable votes with only eight of those cast by Republicans.

Rep. Welch also cosponsored a bipartisan amendment by Rep. James McGovern (D-Mass.) that would have required the Secretary to develop a plan for a transition of military operations to Afghan authorities and a plan for negotiations leading to political reconciliation in Afghanistan. This amendment failed by a vote of 204 to 215 and had the support of 26 Republicans. A similar amendment during the 111th Congress received 138 favorable votes with only seven of those cast by Republicans.

"While we did not prevail today, I am heartened that the votes reveal bipartisan opposition to this ten-year-old war is growing," Welch said. "It is becoming clearer every day that it makes no sense for American taxpayers to fund a nation-building policy in a hopelessly corrupt

House votes on Welch amendments to end the war in Afghanistan

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Afghanistan, especially given our fiscal challenges at home. General Petraeus tells us there are less than 100 al Qaeda members in Afghanistan. A more effective approach to the serious threat of terrorism is a targeted, worldwide counter-terrorism strategy similar to the intelligence and special operations mission that located and killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan earlier this month."

Welch voted no on the final passage of H.R. 1540. The legislation passed the House by a vote of 322 to 96.